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Review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD and their financing

Report by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD

Executive summary

UNCTAD technical cooperation expenditures rose to $40 million in 2017, with two products, namely the Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA) and the Debt Management and Financial Analysis System (DMFAS), representing 59 per cent of total expenditures. The least developed countries remained the group of focus among beneficiary countries and their share of total expenditures reached a record high of 49 per cent in 2017.

In contrast, in 2017, UNCTAD trust fund resources for technical cooperation decreased by 12 per cent to $35 million, mainly as a result of a significant reduction in voluntary funding from developed countries as well as from developing countries and countries with economies in transition. For the first time in the past two decades, the share of developed countries in total trust fund contributions was below 20 per cent.

To better assist developing countries in addressing national priorities related to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, UNCTAD is repositioning itself in the context of the reform of the United Nations development system. In particular, UNCTAD is aligning technical cooperation with the Goals, mainstreaming results-based management and gender into development projects and expanding internal and external cooperation to harness comparative advantages in order to deliver integrated results. However, the efforts of UNCTAD need to be coupled with enhanced funding support from traditional and emerging donors. UNCTAD is prepared to work with existing and potential funding partners to explore new funding opportunities.

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Introduction

1. This report has been prepared to facilitate the annual policy review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD by the Trade and Development Board. The report will be submitted to the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget for its review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD, in line with the provisions set out in paragraph 220 of the Accra Accord and in a series of Trade and Development Board decisions from 2008 to 2017,[1] including its latest decision, namely decision 533 (LXIV) of 20 September 2017. Through these decisions, the Trade and Development Board recommends a more structured interaction between the secretariat, potential beneficiaries and donors, to be carried out within the framework of the Working Party, which is the main mechanism for consultations among member States on all technical cooperation issues.

2. This report provides an overview of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD and their financing in 2017. It analyses the main trends in the funding and delivery of such cooperation and highlights the key actions taken by UNCTAD over the past year to improve the structure and functioning of such cooperation. Some good examples and lessons learned are also shared. The report ends with conclusions and suggestions for the way forward.

3. Within the United Nations Sustainable Development Group, UNCTAD has continued to advocate for the inclusion of non-resident agencies in United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks at the country level, as well as for increased emphasis on United Nations assistance in trade and related areas.

I. Funding sources

4. UNCTAD technical cooperation activities are financed through the following two main sources:

(a) Funding for UNCTAD trust funds, which refers to the financial resources provided for trust funds by individual Governments, the European Commission, the United Nations system and other international organizations and other donors from the private and public sectors;

(b) The United Nations regular programme of technical cooperation and the Development Account.

5. Contributions received under the "Delivering as one" initiative to support joint programmes of the United Nations Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity are included in the aggregate funding for trust funds. In view of the importance of the Cluster in the United Nations system-wide coherence reform and in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, chapter I, section C of this report specifically reports on UNCTAD access to "Delivering as one" funding mechanisms. Contributions to the United Nations Junior Professional Officer programme are not included in UNCTAD trust fund resources and are reported separately in chapter I, section D.

A. Trust fund resources

6. Extrabudgetary resources, in the form of voluntary funding to trust funds, are the most important funding source for UNCTAD technical cooperation. Unpredictability, fluctuations across years and earmarking towards specific activities remain the salient features of extrabudgetary resources. In 2017, contributions to trust funds continued to be marked by these features. The relatively high level of funding in 2016 was not extended to 2017. In contrast, compared with levels in 2016, funding levels decreased by 12 per cent and trust fund resources were $35.1 million (table 1). This decrease was due to a significant reduction

[1] Decisions 495 (LV) of 2008, 498 (LVI) of 2009, 504 (LVII) of 2010, 510 (LVIII) of 2011, 515 (LIX) of 2012, 520 (LX) of 2013, 523 (LXI) of 2014, 526 (LXII) of 2015 and 529 (LXIII) of 2017.

in voluntary funding from developed countries, as well as from developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

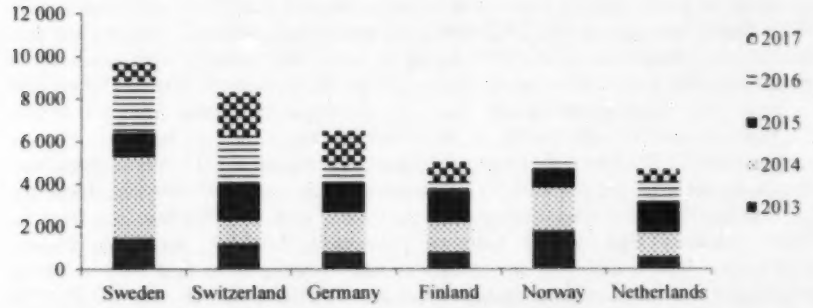
Table 1
Sources of UNCTAD trust fund resources, 2013–2017
(Thousands of dollars)

	2013	*2014*	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*
Developed countries[a]	7 865	12 047	8 570	9 693	6 762
Developing countries and countries with economies in transition[b]	12 782	16 060	17 590	19 906	15 017
European Commission	2 783	5 629	1 727	1 073	3 016
United Nations system and other international organizations[c]	7 020	5 432	6 237	8 881	9 283
Private and public sectors	782	246	565	514	1044
Total	**31 232**	**39 415**	**34 689**	**40 068**	**35 123**

Note: Totals reflect rounded figures.
[a] Exclusive of contributions to the United Nations Junior Professional Officer programme.
[b] A major part is self-financing, which may be derived, for example, from proceeds of loans or grants from international financial institutions, for activities in the countries that provided funding.
[c] For details, see TD/B/WP/290/Add.2, table 14.

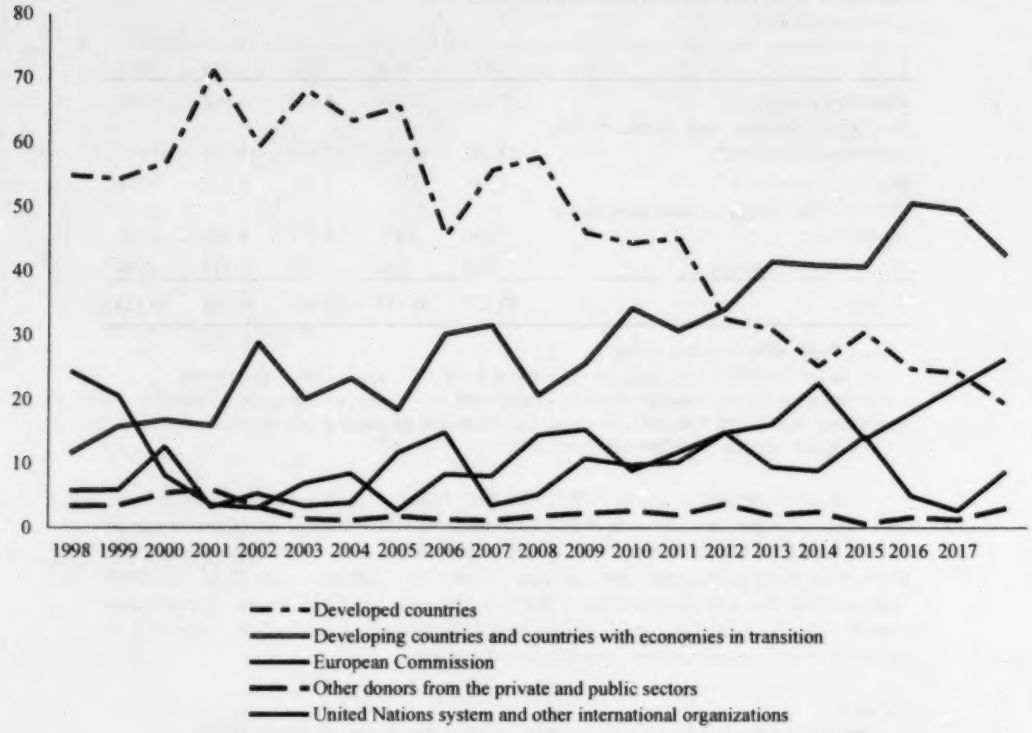
7. In 2017, contributions to UNCTAD trust funds from developed countries were $6.8 million, 30 per cent less than in 2016. Consequently, the share of developed countries in total trust fund resources decreased from 24.2 per cent in 2016 to 19.3 per cent in 2017, the lowest share in the past two decades (figure 1). Compared with 2016, in 2017, eight developed country donors reduced their contributions and three donors increased their contributions, namely Finland, Germany and Luxembourg. Contributions decreased in particular from Sweden and the United States of America.

Figure 1
Accumulated contributions by major developed country donors, 2013–2017
(Thousands of dollars)



8. Among developed country donors in 2017, Switzerland was the largest donor, with annual contributions of $2 million, followed by Germany, with contributions of $1.6 million, an increase of 93 per cent compared with 2016. Together, these two donors represented 54 per cent of the total contributions from developed countries. Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden combined represented 34 per cent of developed country contributions in 2017. With regard to total contributions accumulated in the last five years, Sweden and Switzerland remained the top two developed country donors, ahead of Germany, Finland, Norway and the Netherlands (figure 2). In 2017, developed country contributions were mainly directed towards such areas as debt management; electronic commerce and the digital economy; investment and public health; trade facilitation; business facilitation; competition and consumer protection policies and frameworks; and trade, gender and development.

Figure 2
Evolution of share of UNCTAD trust fund resources by funding source, 1998–2017
(Percentage)



9. After three years of consecutive growth, funding from developing countries and countries with economies in transition reached a turning point in 2017. Overall, funding from 64 developing countries to UNCTAD trust funds reached $15 million, 25 per cent less than in 2016. As a result, the share of developing countries and countries with economies in transition in total trust fund resources decreased from 49.7 per cent in 2016 to 42.8 per cent in 2017. This decrease was mainly due to a reduction in funding from Kazakhstan ($5.2 million) and Haiti ($1.8 million), which had provided significant funding in 2016 to implement ASYCUDA projects. Despite the significant decrease in 2017, contributions from developing countries and countries with economies in transition were more than double the contributions from developed countries, and the share of total trust fund resources from the former remained high from a historical perspective. In 2017, developing country contributions were mainly (93 per cent) allocated to activities in their own countries, in particular to implement programmes related to ASYCUDA (62 per cent) and DMFAS (30 per cent). The remaining 7 per cent of developing country contributions ($1 million) was used to support activities beyond contributing countries. This percentage was low, yet it was an improvement compared with the level in 2016 (4 per cent). With contributions of $0.4 million in 2017, China remained the largest developing country contributor in support of UNCTAD technical cooperation in other developing countries.

10. Following the resolution of technical issues between the European Commission and the United Nations in 2016, contributions from the European Commission rose to $3 million in 2017, almost triple the amount in 2016. Accordingly, its share of total trust fund resources rose significantly, from 2.7 per cent in 2016 to 8.6 per cent in 2017. In 2017, European Commission contributions were directed towards trade-related training programmes, competition and consumer protection, debt management, trade facilitation and ASYCUDA.

Together, the European Commission and member States of the European Union represented 22 per cent of total UNCTAD trust fund resources in 2017.

11. Funding from the United Nations system and other international organizations continued to increase. In 2017, it reached a five-year high of $9.3 million, an increase of 4.5 per cent compared with 2016. This represented 26.4 per cent of total trust fund resources, rising from 22.2 per cent in 2016. For the first time in the past two decades, the share of this category of funding represented more than one quarter of total trust fund resources and surpassed the share of developed countries, to become the second most important funding source. Contributions from the World Bank, the West African Economic and Monetary Union and Trade Mark East Africa combined accounted for 68 per cent of funding from the United Nations system and other international organizations.

12. In 2017, funding from the private and public sectors was $1 million, double the contributions in 2016, and represented 3 per cent of total trust fund resources, rising from 1.3 per cent in 2016. This included contributions to a project on non-tariff measures-related data updates for selected major economies, financed by the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies of Japan; and a Train for Trade port training project funded by port authorities from several developing countries.

B. United Nations regular programme of technical cooperation and the Development Account

13. Programme budget resources for technical cooperation activities are provided under the United Nations regular programme of technical cooperation and the Development Account, that is, sections 23 and 35, respectively, of the United Nations programme budget.

14. In 2017, total expenditures under the United Nations regular programme of technical cooperation and the Development Account increased by 39 per cent, to $4.6 million, the highest level since 2009. This amount represented 11.5 per cent of total technical cooperation expenditures in 2017, rising from 8.5 per cent in 2016.

15. Resources under the United Nations regular programme of technical cooperation are provided for advisory services and training. In 2017, expenditures were $1.4 million, an increase of 85 per cent compared with 2016. As in the past, training-related resources under the regular programme of technical cooperation were mainly used to finance the UNCTAD course on key issues on the international economic agenda.

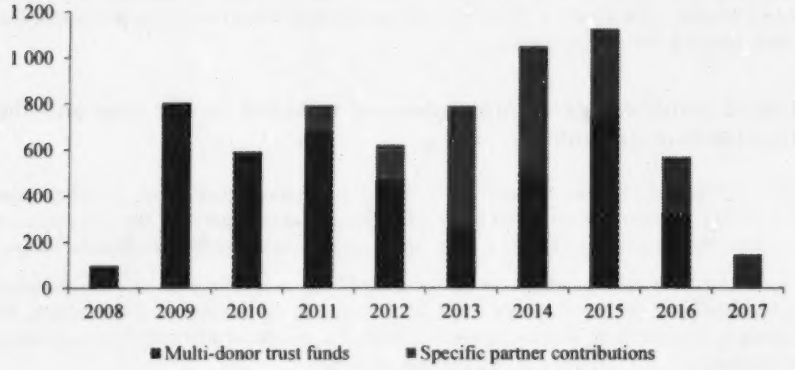
16. The Development Account is an important capacity development programme of the United Nations Secretariat aimed at enhancing the capacities of developing countries in the priority areas under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Projects are carried out under tranches by 10 implementing entities of the United Nations Secretariat, including UNCTAD. Each tranche has a lifespan of 3–4 years. Since the establishment of the Development Account by the General Assembly in its resolution 52/12B, 62 UNCTAD projects have been funded under 10 tranches. Total expenditures under the Development Account rose from $2.6 million in 2016 to $3.2 million in 2017, mainly to support the implementation of projects under the ninth and tenth tranches. These projects covered a wide range of UNCTAD work (see TD/B/WP/290/Add.2, table 10).

17. In 2018–2021, under the eleventh tranche of the Development Account, UNCTAD will lead or jointly implement eight capacity development projects with a total budget of $6.2 million. These projects cover a variety of areas in which UNCTAD possesses technical expertise, namely enterprise sustainability and Goals-related reporting; trade in services; statistics on illicit financial flows; the ocean economy and trade strategies; science, technology and innovation; investment facilitation; electronic commerce; and support for the least developed countries in achieving structural economic progress towards graduation from the least developed country category. The projects aim to support beneficiary countries or regions in implementing the 2030 Agenda by linking project results with specific Goals. All of the projects have adopted a multi-stakeholder approach and will be delivered in collaboration with partners within and beyond the United Nations system. By the end of March 2018, funds had been allotted for six of the eight projects.

C. Contributions to support joint programmes of the United Nations Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity

18. The United Nations Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity, led by UNCTAD, consists of 15 resident and non-resident United Nations agencies. The Cluster is an inter-agency mechanism dedicated to the coordination of trade and development operations within the United Nations system. It makes a concrete and direct contribution to the United Nations system-wide coherence reform process by coordinating inter-agency operations at the global, regional and country levels and by accessing innovative financing mechanisms such as specific partner contributions and multi-donor trust funds, which are complementary resources under the "Delivering as one" initiative (figure 3).

Figure 3
UNCTAD access to "Delivering as one" funding mechanisms, 2008–2017
(Thousands of dollars)



1. Specific partner contributions

19. Specific partner contributions are direct contributions to one or more agencies given by one or more donors to support inter-agency coordination.

20. In 2017, UNCTAD received an allocation of $144,000 from the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs of Switzerland, representing the final instalment for a joint programme in the United Republic of Tanzania. This programme was developed by the Cluster with the participation of the International Labour Organization, the International Trade Centre, UNCTAD, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the United Nations Office for Project Services, and began in 2014. The programme, aimed at strengthening the tourism sector and backward linkages to local agricultural and horticultural producers, has become an example of a best practice. It has effectively contributed to the implementation of the outcomes of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework by enhancing the capacity of the private sector to better access international markets through responsible tourism practices, high-quality products and improved skilled labour.

2. Multi-donor trust funds

21. Multi-donor trust funds such as the One United Nations fund are established with a multitier governance structure involving representatives from the United Nations system, Governments and donors. Developed within an open and transparent financial framework and designed based on United Nations Sustainable Development Group guidelines, these funds complement the individual resources of agencies for global, regional and country-led joint operations. Under the United Nations development system reform, these funds are identified as key financing mechanisms on which the United Nations system can build in order to reposition itself to deliver on the 2030 Agenda.[2]

[2] A/72/684–E/2018/7, p. 34.

22. In 2017, UNCTAD did not receive allocations from multi-donor trust funds. Allocation of the first instalment from the One United Nations fund in support of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework in the United Republic of Tanzania was postponed to 2018 for technical reasons. However, 2017 was an important year for UNCTAD with regard to multi-donor trust funds. Building on the positive experience of the Delivering Results Together Fund, which ended in December 2016, UNCTAD will participate in two multi-donor trust funds at the global and regional levels, to ensure participation in multi-donor trust funds in support of the United Nations development system reform and implementation of the 2030 Agenda. At the global level, in July 2017, UNCTAD signed a memorandum of understanding to participate in the Joint Fund for the 2030 Agenda, aimed at integrated policy support in order to advance the Goals. At the regional level, in March 2017, UNCTAD signed a memorandum of understanding to participate in the United Nations Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework, developed under the auspices of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region and aimed at achieving peace through a regional approach.

D. Financing of Junior Professional Officers

23. In addition to the funding sources mentioned above, some donors support the Junior Professional Officer programme of UNCTAD, carried out under the Junior Professional Officer programme of the United Nations. In 2017, Germany remained the sole contributor to the UNCTAD programme, with four sponsored Junior Professional Officers (see TD/B/WP/290/Add.2, table 8). In the first half of 2018, China and Italy each sponsored a Junior Professional Officer, to support work on, respectively, science, technology and innovation and creative economies. This programme offers a unique opportunity for young professionals to participate in the analytical and operational work of UNCTAD. All substantive divisions of UNCTAD have a strong demand for Junior Professional Officers. The secretariat therefore reiterates its request for donors in a position to do so to consider sponsoring Junior Professional Officers.

II. Expenditures and allocation of technical cooperation resources

24. In 2017, overall expenditures for the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD were $40 million, 2.5 per cent greater than in 2016. With regard to funding sources, expenditures under trust funds were $34.9 million, almost the same as in 2016. However, due to the increase in total expenditures, the share of trust fund expenditures in total expenditures decreased to 87 per cent. In contrast, with expenditures of $4.6 million in 2017, the share of the United Nations regular programme of technical cooperation and the Development Account in total expenditures rose to 11.5 per cent, the highest share since 2009. Expenditures under "Delivering as one" funding mechanisms decreased from $0.86 million in 2016 to $0.57 million in 2017, accounting for 1.4 per cent of total annual expenditures (table 2).

Table 2
Technical cooperation expenditures by funding source, 2014–2017

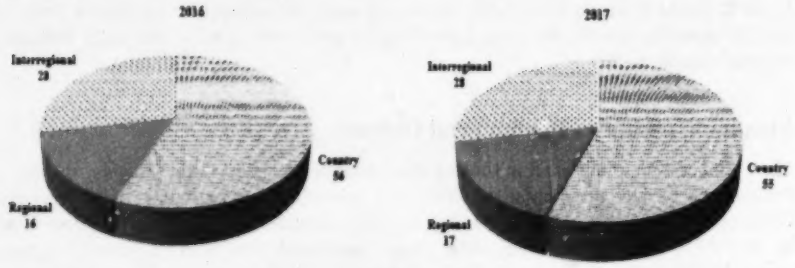
	2014	*2015*	*2016*	*2017*		
	Amount (thousands of dollars)				*Share of total (percentage)*	*Change over previous year (percentage)*
Trust funds	34 805	34 600	34 928	34 923	87.1	0.01
United Nations regular programme of technical cooperation and Development Account	2 802	4 080	3 308	4 595	11.5	38.89
"Delivering as one" funding mechanisms	1 174	877	860	569	1.4	(33.86)
Total	**38 780**	**39 557**	**39 097**	**40 087**	**100.0**	**2.53**

Note: Totals reflect rounded figures (see TD/B/WP/290/Add.2, table 2).

A. Types of projects

25. UNCTAD technical cooperation projects are delivered at the interregional, regional and country levels. Since 2014, country-level projects have accounted for more than half of total annual expenditures. Combined with interregional projects, these two forms of technical cooperation represented 83 per cent of total technical cooperation expenditures in 2017 (figure 4).

Figure 4
Expenditures as share of total technical cooperation expenditures, by type of project, 2016 and 2017
(Percentage)



26. Interregional-level projects are thematic projects implemented in beneficiary countries, which cover more than one geographic region. In 2017, expenditures under this type of project were almost the same as in 2016, amounting to $11.1 million, or 28 per cent of total technical cooperation expenditures. Such projects covered all working areas of UNCTAD, in particular debt management; investment facilitation; competition policy and consumer protection; and information and communications technology policies and applications for development.

27. In 2017, expenditures under country-level projects were almost the same as in 2016, amounting to $22.1 million, or 55 per cent of total expenditures. Such projects were mainly related to customs modernization and reform through ASYCUDA, debt management through DMFAS and investment facilitation. Most country-level projects are self-financed, including resources made available by donors from bilateral aid programmes. Expenditures on country-level projects in two regions, namely Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean, increased by 6 and 49 per cent, respectively, compared with 2016. In 2017, 59 per cent of expenditures under country-level projects related to the implementation of projects in the least developed countries.

28. In 2017, expenditures under regional-level projects were $6.9 million, compared with $6.2 million in 2016, or 17 per cent of total expenditures, a slight increase compared with 2016. Expenditures on such projects increased in all regions except in Europe and North America. Together, expenditures on regional and country-level projects in 2017 totalled $29 million, or 72 per cent of total expenditures.

B. Distribution by product

29. The 28 technical cooperation products in the updated *UNCTAD Toolbox* are grouped under four thematic areas and are linked to 17 thematic clusters (table 3). In 2017, expenditures under these products amounted to $36.5 million, representing 91 per cent of total annual technical cooperation expenditures. In 2017, five products each accounted for expenditures of over $1 million; ASYCUDA had the highest expenditures, at $19.1 million, or 47.7 per cent of total expenditures, followed by DMFAS, with 10.9 per cent of total expenditures. Three other products, namely business facilitation; competition and consumer protection policies and frameworks; and electronic commerce and the digital economy, accounted for 6.1, 4.6 and 3.1 per cent of total expenditures, respectively. Together, these five products accounted for 72.4 per cent of total UNCTAD technical cooperation expenditures.

Table 3
Technical cooperation expenditures by theme, 2017

Theme	*Cluster*	*Product*	*Relevant Sustainable Development Goal(s)*	*Expenditures (dollars)*	*Share of total (percentage)*
A		**Transforming economies, fostering sustainable development**			
A1	VII	Investment policy reviews	8 and 17	187 650	0.47
A2	I	Services policy reviews	8 and 9	48 998	0.12
A3	I	Trade policy framework reviews	17	9 058	0.02
A4	XIV	Science, technology and innovation policy reviews	9	3 737	0.01
A5	XIII	Electronic commerce and the digital economy	8, 9 and 17	1 236 286	3.08
A6	VIII	Investment guides	9 and 17	148 418	0.37
A7	II	Non-tariff measures	8 and 17	246 388	0.61
A9	I	Trade negotiations	10	8 874	0.02
A10	III	Sustainable trade and the environment	8 and 17	822 017	2.05
A11	VIII	Investment promotion and facilitation	9 and 17	474 876	1.18
B		**Tackling vulnerabilities, building resilience**			
B1	XVI	Support to graduation from least developed country status	8	102 334	0.26
B2	XI	DMFAS	17	4 364 858	10.89
B4	XVII	UNCTAD contribution to the Enhanced Integrated Framework	9 and 17	179 093	0.45
B5	XVII	Market access, rules of origin and geographical indications for the least developed countries	8, 10 and 17	53 163	0.13
B6	V	Breaking the chains of commodity dependence	8 and 9	656 771	1.64
B9	XII	Sustainable and resilient transport	8 and 9	439 948	1.10
C		**Fostering economic efficiency, improving governance**			
C1	IV	Voluntary peer reviews of competition and consumer protection laws and policies	8 and 10	15 000	0.04
C2	VIII	Business facilitation	8 and 16	2 444 040	6.10
C3	XII	Trade facilitation	10 and 16	821 173	2.05
C4	XII	ASYCUDA	9	19 107 098	47.66
C5	X	Statistics	17	764 771	1.91
C7	IX	Corporate accounting and reporting	12 and 17	99 147	0.25
C8	VI	Investment and public health	3 and 9	929 063	2.32
C9	VII	International investment agreements	17	178 485	0.45
C10	IV	Competition and consumer protection policies and frameworks	8 and 10	1 850 259	4.62
D		**Empowering people, investing in their future**			
D1	II	Trade, gender and development	5 and 8	504 394	1.26
D3	IX	Entrepreneurship development	4 and 8	314 085	0.78
D6	XIV	Train for Trade	8 and 9	489 247	1.22
Total				**36 499 232**	**91.05**

30. In addition in 2017, nine products each accounted for expenditures at 1–3 per cent of total expenditures, led by investment and public health; sustainable trade and the environment; and trade facilitation. Expenditures under each of the remaining 14 products represented less than 1 per cent of total expenditures. This may partly be explained by funding shortfalls. In addition, additional support provided through the regular budget is not taken into account in the figures detailed in table 3.

31. Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, UNCTAD has taken concrete steps to mainstream the Goals into its technical cooperation work (see box). Linkages between the 28 technical cooperation products in the updated *UNCTAD Toolbox* and the Goals are shown in table 3. UNCTAD technical cooperation is most relevant to Goal 9, on industry, innovation and infrastructure. An estimated $21.3 million, or 53 per cent of total expenditures, mainly under 11 products, directly contributed towards achieving this Goal. UNCTAD technical cooperation is also highly relevant to Goal 8, on decent work and economic growth, and Goal 17, on partnerships for the Goals; in 2017, of total expenditures, 11 and 20 per cent, respectively, contributed towards achieving Goal 8 and Goal 17.

Mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goals into the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, UNCTAD has geared its technical cooperation activities towards contributing to the achievement of the Goals. Results frameworks have been developed at the product level that align the results of each product with the Goals of focus and the targets under these Goals. Under the updated *UNCTAD Toolbox*, each thematic area is linked to relevant Goals and the Goals that are directly and indirectly addressed are identified for each product. At the project level, project officers are required to mainstream the Goals into projects by describing how projects contribute to achieving the Goals; specifying relevant targets under the Goals; using the findings of voluntary national reviews (on progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda) in project documents whenever such information is available; and ensuring that the Goals of focus in the results framework match those selected for the product. These requirements are verified by UNCTAD during the project clearance process to ensure that the intended results of any new project will contribute to achieving the Goals.

In the substantive area of technical cooperation, UNCTAD has developed or improved its tools to better align its technical cooperation with the Goals. For example, UNCTAD is designing a new methodology for national science, technology and innovation policy reviews, to assist developing countries to better integrate the sustainability and inclusiveness dimensions of development into science, technology and innovation policies, alongside the economic considerations that were formerly the sole focus of the reviews. In the area of investment promotion and facilitation, an online platform (greenFDI.org) has been developed to meet the learning and networking needs expressed by investment promotion agencies worldwide in promoting green sectors and sustainable development. A model investment project proposal for Goals-related projects has also been developed to assist investment promotion agencies in developing countries in the preparation of pipelines of bankable Goals-related projects.

C. Geographic distribution

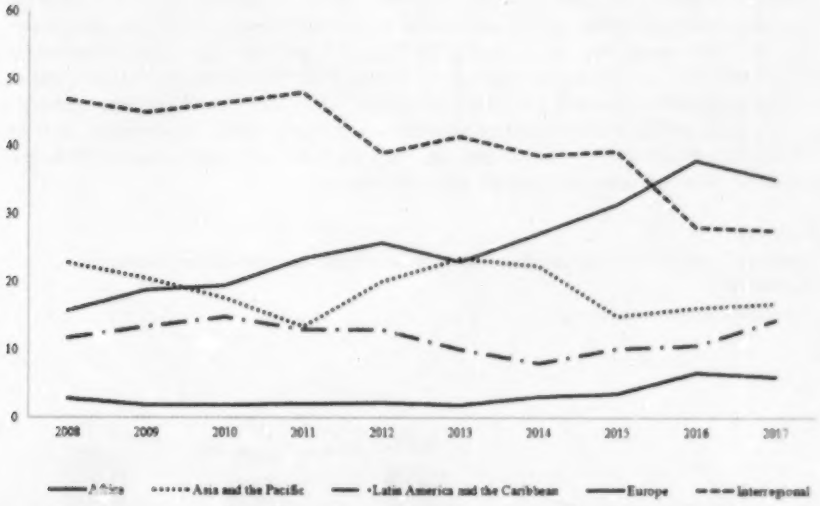
32. Out of $29 million in expenditures on regional and country-level projects, $14 million, or 49 per cent, was spent on projects in Africa, namely $4.2 million on regional-level projects and $9.9 million on country-level projects (table 4). Compared with 2016, total expenditures on regional and country-level projects in Africa decreased by 5 per cent, mainly due to a decrease in the delivery of projects related to transport and trade facilitation, investment facilitation and trade negotiations and commercial diplomacy. After three years of growth, the share of regional and country-level projects in Africa in total technical cooperation expenditures decreased from 38 per cent in 2016 to 35 per cent in 2017. However, this was the second highest share for Africa in the past decade (figure 5).

Table 4
Technical cooperation expenditures by region, 2014–2017

	2014	2015	2016	2017	
	Amount (thousands of dollars)				Percentage
Africa[a]	10 526	12 477	14 828	14 091	35.2
Asia and the Pacific[a]	8 700	5 943	6 340	6 722	16.8
Latin America and the Caribbean[a]	3 160	4 042	4 125	5 743	14.3
Europe[a]	1 183	1 378	2 597	2 412	6.0
North America[a]	167	187	207	-	0.0
Interregional	15 045	15 531	10 999	11 119	27.7
Of which, least developed countries	15 358	18 858	18 180	19 789	49.4
Total	**38 780**	**39 557**	**39 097**	**40 087**	**100.0**

[a] Total expenditures exclusively for regional and country-level projects.

Figure 5
Shares of total annual technical cooperation expenditures by region, 2008–2017
(Percentage)



Note: Only expenditures on regional and country-level projects are taken into account in the calculation of the regional shares in this figure and the share of North America is not reflected as no expenditures were recorded in 2017.

33. Expenditures on regional and country-level projects in Asia and the Pacific in 2017 were $6.7 million, or 6 per cent greater than in 2016. The share of such projects in Asia and the Pacific in total expenditures increased slightly, from 16 per cent in 2016 to 17 per cent in 2017. Decreased delivery of activities in the areas of debt management and science, technology and innovation were offset by increased delivery of activities in the areas of transport and trade facilitation; and trade, environment and development, as well as under the Enhanced Integrated Framework.

34. Expenditures on regional and country-level projects in Latin America and the Caribbean increased significantly in 2017, to reach $5.7 million, or 39 per cent greater than in 2016. Enhanced delivery of activities in the areas of transport and trade facilitation; investment facilitation; and competition policy and consumer protection largely contributed to the higher amount of expenditures in the region. Consequently, the share of regional and country-level projects in the region in total expenditures increased, from 11 per cent in 2016 to 14 per cent in 2017.

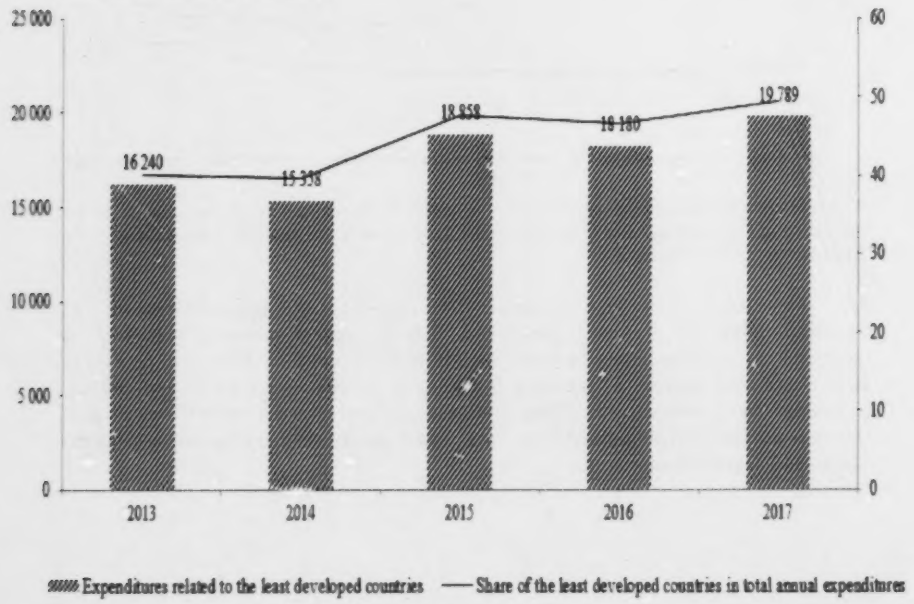
35. Expenditures on regional and country-level projects in Europe in 2017 were $2.4 million, or 7 per cent less than in 2016. The share of such projects in Europe in total expenditures was 6 per cent, or 0.6 per cent less than in 2016. Decreased delivery of activities in the areas of debt management; trade analysis capacities and information systems; and competition policy and consumer protection largely contributed to the lower amount of expenditures in the region.

36. No expenditures were recorded in North America in 2017.

D. Technical cooperation expenditures in support of the least developed countries

37. The least developed countries are prioritized in the UNCTAD strategy for delivering technical cooperation activities. In 2017, technical cooperation expenditures in support of the least developed countries reached a new record high of $19.8 million, or 8.9 per cent greater than in 2016 (figure 6). As a result, the share of the least developed countries in overall technical cooperation expenditures increased, from 46.5 per cent in 2016 to a record high of 49.4 per cent in 2017. Of such expenditures, $13 million, or 66 per cent, related to country-level projects in the least developed countries, covering programmes such as ASYCUDA and DMFAS, as well as projects under the Enhanced Integrated Framework and related to electronic commerce and the digital economy.

Figure 6
Technical cooperation expenditures in support of the least developed countries, 2013–2017
(Thousands of dollars and percentage)



38. The Nairobi Maafikiano states that UNCTAD should assist the least developed countries in making use of existing initiatives and programmes, including targeted assistance under the Enhanced Integrated Framework.[3] In 2017, with the support of UNCTAD, progress was made on two regional initiatives under the Framework, namely through the elaboration of regional project proposals on joint action and coordination on transit, transport and trade facilitation. A proposal for Western Africa, following validation from Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger, was officially submitted to the Framework secretariat in 2018, and a proposal for Eastern Africa was approved by the National Steering Committee of the Framework in Ethiopia and is being considered by the Committee in Djibouti. In addition, at the country level, tailored assistance and advice was provided to Benin, the Gambia, Haiti, Mali, Myanmar and the Niger.

39. UNCTAD continued to direct technical cooperation activities to the most vulnerable group of countries. However, the multi-donor trust fund for the least developed countries experienced a shortage of funding. Without any new contributions in 2015–2017, the fund balance was $183,127 at the end of 2017. Developed countries and other development partners in a position to do so are requested to make contributions to the Trust Fund for the Least Developed Countries.

III. Structure and functioning

A. Follow-up to intergovernmental decisions

1. Thematic rationalization

40. In 2017, UNCTAD continued its efforts to enhance thematic rationalization, focused on the revision of the *UNCTAD Toolbox*. Two years after its launch in 2015, the *UNCTAD Toolbox*, as a practical instrument in consolidating UNCTAD operational activities, required an update in order to better reflect new projects and features in UNCTAD technical cooperation activities. The updated *UNCTAD Toolbox* features the 28 main technical cooperation products of UNCTAD under four overarching themes. In 2017, 187 projects, with expenditures of $36.5 million, were grouped under these 28 products. This suggests that 86 per cent of projects with expenditures in 2017, or 91 per cent of technical cooperation expenditures, were integrated into the updated *UNCTAD Toolbox*, in comparison with the first version of the *UNCTAD Toolbox*, under which 78 per cent of projects with expenditures in 2016, or 84 per cent of technical cooperation expenditures, were consolidated.

41. Under the updated *UNCTAD Toolbox*, a number of products have been developed or revised to further reduce fragmentation in technical cooperation activities. For example, in the area of electronic commerce, the broader product entitled "electronic commerce and the digital economy" has replaced the former electronic commerce and law reform programme, as the rapid expansion of electronic commerce-related technical cooperation in the past few years reinforced the need for a more comprehensive product to capture the diversified technical cooperation activities offered by UNCTAD.

42. In 2017, with the support of donors, UNCTAD financially closed 18 projects and started 25 new projects (see TD/B/WP/290/Add.2, tables 15 and 16). In total, in 2017, the number of operational projects with expenditures decreased to 217, or 45 projects fewer than in 2008, when actions towards reducing fragmentation started.

2. Synergies among the three pillars of UNCTAD work

43. The Nairobi Maafikiano states that the three pillars of consensus-building, research and analysis and technical cooperation remain of equal strategic importance and that further efforts are needed to increase their linkages and complementarity.[4]

[3] TD/519/Add.2, para. 38 (s).

[4] Ibid, para. 92.

44. In 2017, UNCTAD continued to promote greater synergies among its three pillars of work. In the area of electronic commerce, for example, technical cooperation activities in the area of electronic commerce and the digital economy built on insights gained through relevant research and analysis, as well as consensus-building activities. The outcome of technical cooperation activities, in return, further enhanced activities under the research pillar. For example, methodological work on electronic commerce and law reform; rapid eTrade readiness assessments; and measuring electronic commerce developed under various technical cooperation projects supported the preparation of *Information Economy Report 2017: Digitalization, Trade and Development*. Finally, examples from capacity-building activities and research findings provided by UNCTAD and partner organizations informed various consensus-building events organized during UNCTAD eCommerce Week 2017, which offered a unique opportunity to demonstrate cross-fertilization among the three pillars in work on electronic commerce.

45. In the area of trade, gender and development, the operations of the related programme are based on a virtuous circle between the three pillars. For example, online courses on trade and gender integrate case studies and broader policy lessons developed through research on the gender ramifications of trade at the regional and country levels. In addition, in 2017, many consensus-building activities, including policy dialogue events on trade and gender, organized or attended by UNCTAD, were informed by findings from analytical work and the results of technical cooperation activities. For example, capacity-building activities carried out at selected border crossings in Malawi, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia were instrumental in collecting first-hand information on the challenges faced by women cross-border traders. Such information enriched analytical work on this topic and was shared with policymakers through policy dialogues.

3. Interdivisional cooperation

46. With regard to interdivisional cooperation on issues related to technical cooperation, the Project Review Committee continues to play an important role as an internal mechanism to ensure coherence on UNCTAD operational activities for development. In 2017, the Committee held four face-to-face meetings to discuss key issues related to the management of technical cooperation activities. In particular, the Committee exchanged views on the findings of the assessment of the pilot phase of the results-based management framework for technical cooperation, agreed on the guiding principles in the revision of the *UNCTAD Toolbox*, provided suggestions for improving administrative procedures for technical cooperation and made comments on new evaluation guidelines, the project management system and online technical cooperation platforms, including the new database of formal requests for UNCTAD technical cooperation. In addition to formal meetings, members of the Committee, that is, the divisional focal points, were also frequently consulted on all issues related to the effective and coherent delivery of technical cooperation activities.

47. Interdivisional cooperation, which builds on the comparative advantages of different divisions, can help to better address cross-disciplinary requests from beneficiary countries. For example, the joint UNCTAD and European Union programme for Angola illustrates the value of interdivisional collaboration. The implementation of the project relies on the expertise of three divisions, namely, the Division on International Trade and Commodities, the Division on Technology and Logistics and the Division on Investment and Enterprise. Each of the technical topics identified by Angola is assigned to the relevant division for implementation. The Division for Africa, Least Developed Countries and Special Programmes is responsible for overall management of the project and for ensuring coordination and complementarity among project components. With a cross-divisional coordination structure in place, UNCTAD is better able to provide tailored technical cooperation activities for beneficiary countries.

4. Inter-agency cooperation

48. Implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires a broad-based partnership and strengthened cooperation among United Nations agencies and international and regional organizations. By building on synergies and harnessing complementarity, UNCTAD can achieve more tangible results from technical cooperation activities.

49. Inter-agency cooperation is a distinctive feature of projects under the eleventh tranche of the Development Account. For example, UNCTAD is working with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime to measure illicit financial flows in Africa. In addition, UNCTAD and the United Nations Environment Programme have strengthened collaboration in order to create enabling policy frameworks for enterprise sustainability and Goals-related reporting in Africa and Latin America. Finally, UNCTAD is cooperating with the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs to assist the least developed countries in achieving structural economic progress towards and beyond graduation from the least developed country category.

50. Many other examples may be drawn from a wide range of technical cooperation activities, including with regard to, among others, ASYCUDA, DMFAS, sustainable and resilient transport and entrepreneurship development. For example, the eTrade for all initiative benefits from the collaboration of 27 partners from the private and public sectors, including the International Telecommunication Union, the International Trade Centre, the World Trade Organization and the five United Nations regional commissions. In the area of investment, UNCTAD, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Bank have jointly developed a set of principles for responsible agricultural investment, which provides a set of guiding values to foster sustainable practices and support the Goals in this pivotal sector.

5. Requests from developing countries

51. UNCTAD launched the database of formal requests for UNCTAD technical cooperation in September 2017, and has received positive feedback. Since then, efforts have been focused on the establishment of an internal platform allowing for timely updates to request data by UNCTAD. In 2018, an application was created for this data-updating platform and testing has begun; the platform is expected to become fully operational in the second half of 2018, which will greatly facilitate the regular updating of information in the request database that is accessible to the public.

52. Lack of funding remains an obstacle to expanding UNCTAD technical cooperation to developing countries with the greatest need. For example, the growing demand for technical cooperation activities in the area of electronic commerce cannot be met with current funding set-ups. Additional funding needs to be identified in order to introduce enhancements and new functionalities to DMFAS software. In addition, a backlog of 27 pending requests is currently registered for investment policy reviews. Many other areas of activity are similarly experiencing funding shortages, such as competition and consumer protection; entrepreneurship development; trade, gender and development; science, technology and innovation; accession to the World Trade Organization; and trade facilitation.

53. In recent years, UNCTAD has made continuous efforts to explore innovative ways to overcome funding constraints. This includes expanding its funding base through cooperation with beneficiary countries, funding partners and the private sector. For example, in the area of electronic commerce, an electronic commerce strategy for Egypt was funded by Master Card, an electronic commerce strategy for Oman was funded by the Oman Logistics Centre and a number of rapid eTrade readiness assessments have been funded under the Enhanced Integrated Framework. Another example is the co-financing structure involving beneficiaries and donors created by the regional programme for Competition and Consumer Protection for Latin America (COMPAL), which has actively sought partners in the organization of workshops in order to reduce operational costs. In addition, given the change in priorities of the current donor, to mobilize funds for the forthcoming fourth phase of COMPAL and to approach possible donors, UNCTAD divided the programme into three smaller components, namely competition advocacy to the private sector, the training of the judiciary and the National Institute for the Defense of Competition and Protection of Intellectual Property (INDECOPI)-COMPAL school. This approach has been successful to date; the fourth phase of COMPAL is expected to be supported by at least three donors, including one private sector donor, while continuing to benefit from significant contributions from beneficiaries.

6. Strengthening of results-based management

54. In 2017, UNCTAD further improved the results-based management framework for technical cooperation. Following a one-year pilot of minimum results-based management requirements for technical cooperation, which ended in June 2017, UNCTAD conducted a formal assessment of the pilot, which identified the main lessons learned and reaffirmed the important role of results-based management in enhancing performance and accountability and achieving the Goals. The assessment found that the application of the minimum requirements should be improved, in particular with regard to monitoring, evaluation and the dissemination of results, and suggested that an information technology-based project management tool should be developed and that additional training should be provided to project teams to support the implementation of results-based management. Lessons learned were fed into a planning document on results-based management enhancement activities for the next two years.

55. As a concrete step to implement the recommendations in the assessment, in December 2017, UNCTAD held a pilot results-based management training session for the Competition and Consumer Policies Branch. The two-day session, delivered jointly by the results-based management officer and officers from the Evaluation and Monitoring Unit and the Technical Cooperation Section, adopted a participatory approach and was tailored to the needs of participants. Following the training, the facilitators continued to support participants in applying results-based management knowledge in technical cooperation work. The hands-on, practical training was appreciated by participants. Similar training was delivered to five additional branches in the first half of 2018.

56. An integrated project management system is being developed by the United Nations. In advance of this system, in December 2017, UNCTAD launched a trust fund document approval workflow to streamline project clearance processes. The online tool enables the electronic submission, review and approval of project documents, contribution agreements and memorandums of understanding, and assists enhanced efficiency and monitoring in project clearance.

7. Gender mainstreaming

57. UNCTAD has made further progress in systematically mainstreaming gender equality and women's economic empowerment in technical cooperation projects. Following a pilot phase of over one year, the application of a checklist for mainstreaming gender equality and women's economic empowerment in technical cooperation projects has been mandatory since January 2018. A simplified checklist, applied to projects with a limited potential to integrate gender dimensions, has also been developed. In addition, the launch of an electronic clearance system and the designation of alternate gender focal points at the divisional level will further support gender mainstreaming in new projects.

58. Gender equality is increasingly promoted and integrated in technical cooperation projects. For example, in the field of competition and consumer protection, women are encouraged to participate as resource persons in all activities under the programme for regional economic integration, gender equality and anti-corruption through consumer protection policies in the Middle East and North African region. In addition, a diagnostic study was prepared to raise awareness among the private sector and to sensitize women to their rights as traders and consumers. Finally, with technical cooperation from UNCTAD, the revised Central African Economic and Monetary Community competition rules foresee the adoption of gender parity by the board of the future regional competition authority, which would incentivize the participation of women in the competition law enforcement system of Central Africa.

8. New funding mechanism

59. UNCTAD has been consulting member States on the establishment of a new funding mechanism since April 2016. The mechanism aims to facilitate donor responses to requests from developing countries through periodic coordination meetings between donors and beneficiary countries. The secretariat plans to relaunch this initiative in 2018 and, depending on the results of consultations with member States, may hold its first meeting under this new

funding mechanism in the second half of 2018. This meeting will provide a platform to bring together donors and beneficiary countries.

B. Contributions to United Nations system-wide coherence

60. This section highlights the main contributions of UNCTAD in enhancing the role of the United Nations Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity in United Nations system-wide coherence reform. Since its launch in April 2008, the Cluster has made a concrete and direct contribution to the overall Aid for Trade initiative and United Nations reform.

61. In 2017, the Cluster enhanced its cooperation on research to reach a common policy understanding on key interrelated issues pertinent to trade and development, which will be turned into effective joint programmes to help achieve the Goals. In this regard, the Cluster continued to benefit from cooperation between UNCTAD and the International Labour Organization in the context of the memorandum of understanding signed in 2014. In 2017, specific attention was given to policy convergence between UNCTAD and the International Labour Organization on the theme of trade and employment, pertinent to Goal 8.

62. In line with the United Nations reform, UNCTAD has also worked on widening the scope of the Cluster. In March 2017, UNCTAD signed a memorandum of understanding to participate in the United Nations Great Lakes Regional Strategic Framework. In July 2017, UNCTAD organized a special session in Geneva on working as one to promote development, peace and security in the Great Lakes region, jointly chaired by the Secretary-General of UNCTAD and the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region. The session advised member States of the integrated approach of the Cluster with regard to the development and humanitarian nexus.

63. In addition in 2017, the Cluster expanded its offer to advise member States and decision-makers of the role of the Cluster as part of the development pillar of the United Nations. In addition to the long-standing cooperation of UNCTAD with the advanced trade policy courses of the World Trade Organization, UNCTAD initiated the delivery of courses under the master's degree programme on the management of development at the University of Turin, Italy, and the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization. Course presentations detail the inter-agency policy strength of the Cluster with regard to achieving the Goals.

64. The multi-donor trust fund of the Cluster aims to provide beneficiary countries with predictable resources for integrated policy support to help achieve the Goals. In 2017, UNCTAD established a task team to better engage with donors with regard to the trust fund.

65. Finally, in 2017, UNCTAD continued to deliver joint Cluster outputs in support of the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks at the country level in the following regions:[5]

(a) Africa (Eastern, Middle, Southern and Western): Angola, Cabo Verde, the Comoros, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia;

(b) Africa (Northern): Egypt;

(c) Asia (Eastern, South-Eastern and Southern): Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan and Viet Nam;

(d) Asia (Central and Western) and Europe (Eastern and Southern): Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Montenegro, the Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan;

(e) South America: Uruguay.

[5] See http://www.unctad.org/en/Pages/TC/TC_United-Nations-Inter-Agency-Cluster.aspx.

IV. Conclusions and the way forward

66. In 2017, UNCTAD further increased the delivery of technical cooperation activities, with annual technical cooperation expenditures reaching $40 million, almost equal the decade-high level in 2013. The share of the least developed countries in total expenditures reached a record high of 49.4 per cent. However, with regard to funding to trust funds, UNCTAD received a total of $35.1 million, 3 per cent less than the five-year average in 2013–2017. Contributions from developed countries, in particular, decreased to the lowest level in the past two decades. Such a decrease can have a profound impact on the structure of extrabudgetary funding. In 2017, for the first time in the past 20 years, developed country contributions, which once made up the most significant funding source, became the third most important source, following developing countries and the United Nations system and other international organizations.

67. The United Nations is reforming its development system to better deliver on the 2030 Agenda. UNCTAD, as a non-resident United Nations entity, is repositioning itself to make its technical cooperation fit for purpose. More specifically, it is aligning its normative support and operational activities with the 2030 Agenda, enhancing the results and impact of technical cooperation, mainstreaming gender into development projects and optimizing its expertise for the joint delivery of technical cooperation at the regional and country levels, such as through the United Nations Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity.

68. As reflected by the numerous requests for technical cooperation received by UNCTAD, the expertise and technical support provided by UNCTAD in the area of trade and development and interrelated issues in the areas of finance, technology and investment for inclusive and sustainable development are important in helping developing countries achieve the Goals. In this regard, the availability of predictable and flexible funding is a prerequisite for the timely delivery of technical cooperation activities. UNCTAD continues its efforts to expand the funding base and explore innovative methods of funds mobilization, such as the new funding mechanism. In addition, UNCTAD requests developed and developing countries to increase their contributions, in order for UNCTAD to be better able to support developing countries in addressing national priorities related to achieving the Goals.